796 to various points in the neighbourhood of Mecca connected with the
788 life of the Prophet Muhammad and drinking the water of Zamzam Well. On the last day of the ceremony the pilgrims stand before Ararat, a small mountain near Mecca, and throw stones at various places to symbolise the stoning of the devil. On the 10th Day of Dhul Hajj a great feast takes place. The pilgrims remove their pilgrim's garb and throughout the Moslem world there is feasting and visiting.

796 In Bahrain, Eid al-Adhar is celebrated for three days, the 10th,
535 11th and 12th of Dhul Hajj. In former days there were very colourful scenes and ceremonies at this feast, the retainers of the Ruler used to perform war dances in front of the palace, discharging their ancient rifles into the air, and occasionally at an unlucky member of the audience. The divers, who returned home during the Eid, danced in huge groups for the entertainment of the people and were feasted in the houses which they visited, but today the Ruler has few casual retainers and the Bedouin, who were the mainstay of the dances, have settled down and become ordinary citizens. Arab dances are therefore a
[517] thing of the past and the men who used to perform in them now find their amusements in attending football matches and cinemas.

MUHARRAM

796 The circumstances that brought about the division of the majority of Moslems into the Sunni and Shiite sects have been mentioned in Chapter II. The battle of Kerbela is still recognised by the Shia of Bahrain as a day of mourning for the martyrs who were killed.

During the first nine days of the month of Muharram, the first month in the Islamic year, there is a general mourning among the
[346] Shia for their loss. In the Bahrain martams, which are religious meeting houses not to be confused with the mosques, preachers tell the story
796 of the growth of Islam and the way in which Ali and his family were
537 set aside by those who became the early Caliphs. These mullas, many
[781] of whom come from the Holy Cities of Iraq for the purpose, are often so eloquent that they reduce their audience to tears and wailing for the mortifications inflicted on those whom they regard as the highest of mankind after the Prophet himself. Night and day the tale is unfolded as the mullas take it in turn to preach to the assembled crowds. During the day the martams are not so full but at sunset the congregation increases as men return from their daily work. In the villages and in the towns, in the yellow light of kerosene lamps and in the glare of electricity, the story is told of those events which happened over 12 centuries ago. Many people are introduced into the story, the Old Testament prophets, the Prophet Muhammad, his family and his enemies, angels and archangels and other religious figures.

796 As the days pass the orators and their audience get more carried away so that by the 10th of the month all are ready for the next act of what has been called the "Miracle Play of Hassan and Hussein." This is the public procession of the Shia which takes place every evening

before this day, but gathers strength on the night of the 9th. As the mourners leave the martams they are joined by others, some bearing torches and others carrying models of the tombs of Ali, Hussein and the others, while small children act the parts of the children of Hussein. Bands of men perform complex dances as they beat their backs with metal whips, while others cut their foreheads with swords. Men beat their bare chests as they are led by flag-bearers who keep time for the dancers. Music is supplied by the drums and chanting which fills the air with the sound, while wailing of black-clothed women on the roof-tops of the houses lining the route adds to the noise of the procession. White horses painted red to represent the blood of the martyrs, little children carried in litters and various other figures represent events in the drama of the passion play. As the morning of the 10th breaks preparations are made for the renewal of the procession, police line the routes, by-standers gather and the members of the procession leave the martams, joined later by the Shia from the villages. Slowly the great mass of men and boys passes through the streets, often taking over 1½ hours to pass one point but always completely under control and in time with the beating of the drums and the clash of the cymbals. Each group of men is led by one who is in charge of them and sees that they keep in time. In front of the breast-beaters is a man with a flag whose duty it is to indicate where they are to stop walking and start thumping their chests, and with his flag he indicates the tempo, and all along the route the thud can be heard as thousands of brawny men crash their arms and fists against their chests. In the centre of each huge circle of chain-men are two men with cymbals; these run up and down the road beating the cymbals and shouting "Ya Hussein" as the black robed men and boys strike their naked backs with copper chains. Despite its sound, this latter does little harm to the men and it is very rare that blood is drawn. 796 [535]

In former times it has been known for the man who acted the part of Yazid, the villain of the Passion Play, to have been seriously wounded by people carried away by the scene, but today Yazid no longer appears in the procession, nor does the Christian who gave water to Hussein and his people and who was formerly represented as a man with a sun-helmet, waving a whisky bottle and obviously drunk. This was in the days when the British were the only Christians in Bahrain and this was therefore considered the way in which to indicate a Christian ! Today, with the exception of the small children who are carried in litters the only person who appears in the play is Zain al-Abdin, the only adult male survivor of the massacre, who appears riding on a horse or a camel and whose part is usually taken by one of the religious teachers or their assistants. [186]

The procession[1] is arranged in nationalities, the Bahrainis, Persians, Qatifis and Hasawis, and the two latter groups of people come to Bahrain from Saudi Arabia, where the procession is banned. Each group, led by men with huge embroidered banners, passes along the road through rows of silent onlookers, many of whom are Sunni and 796 795

1 [On the 10th Muharram 73 – Analyst]